

# Saipan Tribune

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## INSIDE



### Poetic Champ

Tinian Elementary School 6th grader Vicente V. Sablan won 1st Place in Poetry Recitation-Middle School Division in the recent Chamorro Language Competition held at the University of Guam—a huge accomplishment considering the large group of participants.

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### Peace Protests

Hundreds of thousands of people around the world rallied against U.S. presence in Iraq on the first anniversary of the war Saturday, in protests that retained the anger, if not the size, of demonstrations held before the invasion began.

Page 13



### Wheels

Whether you need a utility vehicle to tow 3,500 pounds or a sport sedan for a 300-mile highway trip, Cadillac's all-new SRX luxury utility can get the job done.

Page 18

# Patients denied flight bookings

By MARIAN A. MARAYA  
REPORTER

Travel agencies have reportedly stopped issuing flight bookings to Medical Referral patients due to the government's inability to settle its travel arrears.

Acting Medical Referral Director Vicente C. Borja notified Public Health Secretary U. Hofschneider of the situation yesterday,

underscoring the \$73,735.18 that the government collectively owes Pacific Sky Travel Services and MITA Travel.

"Travel agencies in the CNMI have suspended all flight bookings with Medical Referral due to government's nonpayment. Unless this issue is resolved, patient safety and care may be jeopardized," Borja warned in a memo dated March 22, 2004.

The governor's press secretary, Peter A.

Callaghan, assured yesterday that the administration is addressing the problem.

"We share the concerns of the travel agencies. We don't want to put the health of our patients at risk. It's just a matter of shifting priorities," the public information officer told reporters yesterday.

He said the governor's senior policy adviser, Bob Schwalbach, is tending to the matter.

Borja related an incident last March 12

when the MRO tried to make airline reservations for a Medical Referral patient, to no avail.

"We were informed that they could not issue our office a ticket due to the CNMI government's nonpayment of the pending GTRs [Government Travel Requests]," said the MRO official.

MRO was reportedly told by the travel agency—which it did not identify—that

See PATIENTS on Page 8



MARIAN A. MARAYA

### JSA HOPEFULS

Students seeking to participate in the Junior Statesmen of America Program gather at the Northern Marianas College Saturday with JSA program contact person Karen Prosser and OIA Field Rep. Jeff Schorr. The students sat for roundtable discussions on political awareness topics: teenage sexuality, gay marriage and mercy killing or euthanasia. Also in photo are former Rep. William S. Torres, Rep. Heinz S. Hofschneider and historian Sam McPhetres.

## '24-hour water needs rate hike'

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

An increase in water rates is unavoidable if the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. is to provide 24-hour water supply to the community.

"It [rate hike] is a political issue, a social issue, but you can't avoid it if you want a 24-hour water supply. It will cost

you. You can't do it with an empty wallet," said private consultant James Chua during the public comment portion in yesterday's CUC board special meeting.

Chua, a local representative for desalination project proponent USA-Mitsui, said CUC should determine now whether it can afford desalination.

"The issue is affordability. The reason why it did not materialize in the past is

due to the issue of affordability. I believe that the CUC should address this first before any contract is signed," said Chua.

Meantime, CUC board chairman Herman P. Sablan said CUC has not awarded a contract to any company to do water desalination.

"There's no contract yet to be signed," he said.

See 24-HOUR on Page 8

## Man killed as car slams into power pole

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO  
REPORTER

A 26-year-old driver who was reportedly driving under the influence of alcohol died when his car rammed a power pole at the As Teo intersection Saturday morning.

Roger N. Camacho, who was driving his 1996 Mitsubishi sedan, was killed

after sustaining severe head trauma and other injuries in the accident. He is the second DUI fatality this year.

Camacho's passenger, Sheldon R. Kaainoa, 23, suffered lacerations and abrasions on the right side of his head. He was treated at the Commonwealth Health Center, where Camacho was also rushed and pronounced dead 10am Saturday.

Investigation disclosed that the vehicle of the victims was traveling north on Isa Drive and, as it approached the As Teo intersection, it went off the roadway by the sharp curve. The car then hit two power poles.

Traffic investigators said speed and alcohol were factors in the crash. Police

See MAN on Page 8

## Woman found working for dead employer

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

The Department of Labor has denied the renewal application and deferred a subsequent transfer of a nonresident employee following findings that her authorized employer had died three years ago.

DOL hearing officer Jerry Cody, in a March 18 administrative order, said the department grew suspicious of the employment when it noticed that the employer had not signed the 2003 renewal application of the employee, Emma Santiago.

See WOMAN on Page 8



## Local

# Villagomez opposes proposed terminal fee

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO  
REPORTER

A ranking lawmaker is strongly opposed to the proposed implementation of the Passenger Facility Charge that the Commonwealth Ports Authority is mulling to remedy its financial standing.

In a letter addressed to CPA executive director Carlos H. Salas, House vice speaker and Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation and Communication chair Timothy Villagomez stressed that implementing an additional charge to passengers may affect the slow rebound of the tourism industry.

"I request the CPA to reconsider its proposed passenger facility charge scheduled to take effect. We urge CPA to consider fee revenue only as the course of last resort after exploring all possible measures, including cost-cutting solutions, to improve CPA's financial ability to make debt service payments," said Villagomez in the letter dated March 18, 2004.

He explained that the proposed PFC comes at a "most inopportune time" as the Commonwealth government struggles to revive an economy severely weakened by the same events that CPA refers

to as the source of its declining revenues.

"The House leadership is concerned that this new fee would be viewed as anti-business and may adversely affect the visitor industry that has been slowly rebounding after the SARS outbreak and the war in Iraq," the vice speaker further said.

He urged the ports authority to discuss the other options that are being reviewed by the CPA to address its problems.

The CPA earlier disclosed

that a rate study made by Rico and Associates had recommended the immediate implementation of the Passenger Facility Charge, reduction of operating expenses at the CNMI airports, and to place a time limit on the authority's marketing incentive program as means to beef up its sagging revenue.

It was this study that prompted CPA to submit its PFC application to the Federal Aviation Administration for approval. The new fee is likely to be im-

plemented by October 2004 or after nine months of processing.

The CPA would also have to submit the airlines' recommendations and comments to the FAA when signatory airlines submit their comments on the proposed fee. The airline companies have up to today to submit their reactions to the proposal.

The Passenger Facility Charge is similar to the terminal fee that is collected from all outbound passengers. CPA proposes to charge \$4.50 for each outbound passenger.

The CPA airport division ex-

pects to collect \$2.3 million in the first year of the project, based on conservative projections made by Rico and Associates. As tourist traffic increases, the revenue generated would also likely increase. Conservative projections by the CPA expect traffic haul in the next 10 years to increase by 2 percent.

Guam has been implementing the fee for at least six years now, while the Honolulu airport is in the process of enforcing it.

The CPA stressed that almost all U.S. airports and other air transportation facilities around the world have been collecting terminal fees.



Villagomez



EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

The winners in the recent Miss Northern Marianas beauty contest are Rayna Camacho, first runner-up; Kenyelyn Litulumar Arriola, Miss Northern Marianas International; Tracy Lynn Del Rosario, 2004 Miss Northern Marianas World; and Louiena Ruth Pangelinan, 2004 Miss Northern Marianas South Pacific.

## NMBPA drops out of Miss Universe race

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO  
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Beauty Pageant Association has dropped out of the 2004 Miss Universe beauty pageant due to high cost of sending a candidate to the contest in May 2004.

NMBPA vice president Roxanne Diaz and treasurer Jesse Palacios disclosed yesterday that the Northern Marianas would not be represented in this year's Miss Universe contest because of the high license fee and other incidental expenses.

According to the two, the NMBPA has to shell out a \$3,500-license fee plus expenses on airfare, accommodations, gowns, and others, just to send a contestant to the Miss Universe beauty tilt. The NMBPA would also have to send a chaperone—which doubles the cost and likely to jack up the figure to \$10,000 for that pageant alone.

"It is expensive so we decid-

ed to just send a candidate to the Miss World, Miss International, and Miss South Pacific. The license fees are a little bit lower for these contests but still we have to raise funds for them," the officials explained.

For the Miss World, the NMBPA would be paying about \$2,000 for the license fee while the Miss South Pacific's fee is \$1,000. The Miss International contest, on the other hand, has no license fee, the two added.

Regardless of the fees to be paid, NMBPA still faces funding problems in sending out candidates to these beauty pageants to represent the Northern Marianas due to other expenses.

"Like the Miss South Pacific, although we only have to pay \$1,000 for the license fee, the fare is higher and we have to send a chaperone also. Same with the Miss World, which is going to be held in China. Fares would be costly and

there are other expenses also," Palacios pointed out.

The decision surfaced after the recent 2004 Miss Northern Marianas beauty contest, when guests at the coronation night at the Hotel Nikko Saipan noticed that this year's top award was Miss CNMI World, followed by International, South Pacific and the first runner-up.

The NMBPA would be sending Tracy Lynn Del Rosario to the 2004 Miss World contest that would be held in China later this year. Miss Northern Marianas International Kenyelyn Litulumar Arriola would be joining the contest in Japan. Miss Northern Marianas-South Pacific Louiena Ruth Pangelinan will be competing in the Miss South Pacific in American Samoa.

Last year, the NMBPA failed to send 2003 Miss Northern Marianas Universe Kimberly Reyes to the international pageant due to miscommunication problems.

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cmyk

# Board questions member’s meeting with consultant

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

Members of the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Board of Directors have questioned vice chairman Frank Q. Guerrero’s direct discussion with a private consultant on the privatization of Power Plant I in Lower Base.

Board member Joseph Torres queried why Guerrero, who flew to Las Vegas and Seattle earlier this month, is reportedly

holding talks with CUC-hired consultant, Harris Group, on the privatization issue.

“I am concerned that vice chair Guerrero is getting involved in this management matter. It’s the management’s job to meet with the consultant and report to the board what’s going on,” said Torres.

Member Velma Ann Palacios agreed, saying that the board should never be involved in the procurement process.

“I really don’t think that the

board should get involved in the procurement process. He [Guerrero] should not be meeting with the consultant. It’s the management’s job,” she said.

Board chairman Herman P. Sablan agreed, saying, “We’ll have some questions for the vice chair when he gets back.”

Guerrero left Saipan on Feb 27, to attend a three-day audit conference in Las Vegas. He also went to Seattle to attend a family gathering as well as to meet with Harris Group.

Sablan noted that Harris Group has completed its report and had submitted it to CUC. He acknowledged, though, that the board has not received any report from the CUC management on this.

CUC executive director Lorraine A. Babauta said the report remains confidential and that Harris Group is still awaiting some more information from CUC.

She said Harris Group has required CUC to address 35 is-

sues. “We’re in the process of addressing these items,” said Babauta.

Earlier, she reported that Harris Group had advised the CUC to address environmental and personnel issues relating to the proposed privatization.

In particular, Babauta said that Harris Group had told CUC to check on the U.S. Clean Air Act and obtain a pre-certification that would prove that bidders “have the technology and experience with the U.S. Envi-

ronmental Protection Agency.”

At the same time, the CUC needs to address local environmental requirements, as well as plant facility and land lease ownership issues.

Babauta said the consulting firm also said that “CUC must determine how its partnership will deal with existing employees.”

The CUC board earlier approved the hiring of Harris Group at \$103,000 to do the scope of work and evaluation of proposals for the privatization project.

## Yumul steps aside for Palacios

Rep. Ray N. Yumul gave up his membership in the House Natural Resources Committee to make room for Minority Rep. Arnold I. Palacios, who was chair of the same committee during the 13th Legislature.

Yumul, chairman of the Committee on Commerce and Tourism, notified Natural Resources Chairwoman Janet U. Maratita that his removal from the committee is “in the best interest of all.”

“We should allow for more participation for House minority members,” said the youngest member of the 14th Legislature in a letter dated March 18.

Palacios, who also recently joined the Public Utilities, Transportation and Communications Committee, accepted the invitation to join Maratita’s committee on March 18.

House leadership public information officer Charles Reyes Jr. said that Yumul stepped aside for Palacios because of the latter’s extensive background in environment-related issues.

Maratita confirmed yesterday that another minority member, Rep. David Apatang, has joined her committee.

Members of the House Natural Resources panel and its counterpart in the Senate, the Committee on Resources, Economic Development and Programs, sat through a Coral Reef Initiative presentation yesterday morning facilitated by Becky Lizama, Coastal Resources Management acting director.

The briefing, held at the House Chamber, was partly related to the U.S. Dept. of Com-

merce-National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s efforts to provide technical assistance in the development of a Coral Economic Valuation.

Maratita, during the presentation, raised the possibility of relaxing the ban on net fishing among local fishermen, especially for those who fish for personal consumption.

“Fishing is a tradition here in the CNMI. But at the same time, we should also be mindful of the damage this causes on our reefs. We have to balance it out. So I asked if they could take a look at net fishing in comparison to the impact that jet skis and other beach recreational activities have on our reefs,” Maratita said in an interview yesterday. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

## Govt to ensure equity in nursing pay

By LIBERTY DONES  
REPORTER

The government will ensure that local nurses working at the Commonwealth Health Center get an equitable pay, according to Gov. Juan N. Babauta.

“We’re going to bring equity in their salary. We’ve met with them and our nurses just want equity and I support them,” he said.

He said he will ask the Civil Service Commission, the Legislature, as well as other key agencies such as the Office of Personnel Management, and the Attorney General’s Office, to be present in the next round of talks with the local nurses.

“We’re going to meet again to figure out how to go about it, with the goal of setting up a more meaningful wage for the nurses,” he said.

Local nurses recently aired complaints about wage disparity following the entry of directly hired non-resident nurses to CHC early this year.

The group was earlier reported to be planning legal action against CHC over the issue.

Government authorities noted, though, that local nurses are “not against any particular group of nurses.”

“They just want equity. They are not against other groups,” the government said.

Public Health spokesman John Douglas has said that the executive and CHC administration officials are addressing the inequity in pay among the nursing staff.

Douglas said the OPM, in particular, has devised a new pay-step plan to address the disparity.

The department earlier said that the OPM was reviewing the pay

scale of government-hired nurses to ensure fair and just compensation.

The department had noted the government intends to implement a uniform pay scale for nurses.

Reports said most of the directly hired off-island nurses receive \$16 per hour, while the local nurses get a much lower rate.

Off-island hires also get monthly allowance for housing and meals.

The department shifted to direct hiring following findings by the Office of the Public Auditor that patient care would dramatically improve if personnel are directly hired.

OPA had found that directly hired nurses are paid 45 percent more than their agency counterparts, who “received little or no pay raise in seven years.”

The department said there are over 200 nurses currently working at CHC.



## COMMUNITY Briefs

### Chacha Oceanview report card day

Parents and legal guardians of students attending the Chacha Oceanview Junior High School are being informed that the school will have classes today, March 23.

"We also would like to inform you that on Friday, March 26, we will have our 3rd quarter report cards and Open House," the school said in a statement.

Distribution of report cards and open house will be from 4pm to 6pm. Homeroom teachers will do the distribution of the child/children report cards.

"We will have half-day for students on this day; they will be released at 1pm. We encourage all parents and legal guardians to pick up their child/children report's cards," the school said.

For more information, call 664-4100/4103/4105/4106.

### KagES spring cleaning set

Parents, guardians, teachers, staff, students, and community volunteers are being informed that Kagman Elementary School will be having its Spring Cleaning on Saturday, March 27, from 8am to 12 noon, in preparation for an accreditation visit.

"Please bring your cleaning tools, water hoses, bush cutters, working gloves, lawn mowers, rags, etc. to help clean the school campus," the school said in a statement.

A potluck lunch is planned. Participants are urged to bring a dish/drink to share with others. Point of contact is Kinai Chong at 664-3911/12.

Parents are urged to report to their child's classroom/teacher or front office for further instructions.

### VFW Saipan Post to hold officers' elections

The Veterans of Foreign Wars, Saipan Post 3457, is reminding all members that the annual election of officers will be held on Thursday, April 15, 2004. All members are encouraged to attend.

### S&NISWCD meeting next month

The Saipan & Northern Islands Soil And Water Conservation District would like to inform the general public of their meeting on April 6, at 1:30pm, at the Natural Resources Conservation Office. For more information contact the office at 234-6170.

### KES day off set

Koblerville Elementary School is reminding parents and guardians of its students that there will be no school on March 24, which is the Covenant Day holiday.

### HJHS report card day set

Hopwood Junior High School said the school's 3rd Quarter Report Card Day will be held today, March 23, from 3:30pm until 6:30pm. There will be no school today. Parents and guardians are reminded to proceed to their student's homeroom to pick up his/her report card. Counselors and administrators will be available for additional support.

"If you are unable to come on this day, you may pick up your child's report card starting Thursday, March 25, from his/her counselor.

Wednesday, March 24th is Covenant Day. There is no school.

Please call the school at 664-5075 if you have any questions," the school said in a statement.

### 1040 Form distribution set

The Division of Revenue and Taxation wishes to inform all CNMI residents that the distribution of the 2003 1040 forms and instruction has already begun. Those who would like to pick up a copy can drop by at the Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation located at the DanDan Commercial Center from 8am to 4pm.

All residents are asked to pick up the forms during regular business hours. Please be reminded that the deadline for filing 2003 1040 is Thursday, April 15, 2004 at 12am (midnight).

### Veterans of Saipan, Tinian battles sought

Veterans of the World War II battles of Saipan and Tinian will be invited to the commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle for Saipan and Tinian to be held June 12-16, 2004 on Saipan.

The Committee for the Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of WWII is soliciting help from newspapers, churches, state and local chapters of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, Veterans Associations, non-profit organizations, and family members to help identify veterans to be recognized.

Anyone who knows a veteran involved in these battles should send their name and contact information to Jessica Jordan at marianas04-anniversary@yahoo.com, or call (670) 234-7212; fax: (670) 234-7211, or mail: PMB 409 Box 10000 Saipan MP 96950.

### OES Cultural Day set

Oleai Elementary School will hold its annual Cultural Day celebration on April 24, 2004 at the school campus starting at 9am to 2pm. This is a fundraising activity. The proceeds from this event will be used to support OES' ongoing improvement projects.

Everyone is invited. Please join us and support our student's needs.

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# ‘La Fiesta project termination not an option’



Babauta

By **MARIAN A. MARAYA**  
REPORTER

Gov. Juan N. Babauta is drafting a letter to express his unequivocal support for the Northern Marianas College’s bid to continually operate the La Fiesta facility amid financial upheavals threatening to cut the project short.

This came following a meeting between the chief executive and members of the Board of Regents yesterday at the Office of the Governor in Capitol Hill.

Jenn Castro, Public Information and

Protocol Office communications manager, reported that the governor is 100-percent behind NMC’s plan to convert the La Fiesta mall into a new campus for the community college.

At the meeting, the BOR reportedly conveyed its financial challenges in maintaining the La Fiesta operations, as the institution cannot use its own funds to keep the facility running.

“NMC is stuck in a bind for fear of losing its accreditation... BOR is asking if the government can assist them. So the governor is drafting

a letter of support for the project,” said Castro, who was present at the meeting. Governor’s legal counsel Steven M. Newman was also there.

The letter will reportedly be addressed to the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

Castro said the termination of the La Fiesta lease, which was one of the options raised to minimize NMC’s spending, is an alternative that the governor does not support.

“The governor recommended that La Fiesta not be closed down. It’s not an option to him,” said the communications manager.

Babauta reportedly pledged to assist the BOR identify funding to maintain La Fiesta.

The BOR, following the meeting, was supposed to convene yesterday afternoon to discuss in detail the exact dollar figure required.

Besides the governor’s endorsement, the BOR is reportedly poised to draft a letter to Deputy Assistant Secretary for Insular Affairs David Cohen to seek the federal government’s assistance in starting up a study that would explore other options to spur revenue for the La Fiesta undertaking.

## Governor’s office goes online

The Office of the Governor launched Thursday a new website dedicated to the executive branch, its agencies and their functions, among other features.

Press Secretary Peter A. Callaghan yesterday described the new site as interactive, in comparison to the old one, which he

termed as “dull and boring.”

The site can be accessed through the web address [www.executive.gov.mp](http://www.executive.gov.mp).

Since the site’s take-off last week, Callaghan said it has already received hits from around the world.

Jenn Castro, communications manager of the Public Informa-

tion and Protocol Office, is assigned to update and monitor the site on a daily basis.

Among others, the site has links to executive branch agencies’ respective websites, a press room, and a directory of legislation that has been transmitted to the governor for action. *(Marian A. Maraya)*

## Police probes armed robbery in San Antonio

Authorities are now looking into a robbery incident in San Antonio Saturday morning involving two unidentified suspects.

Victims Fang Rong Guan, 38, and Huang Wu Chen, 29, told police investigators that they were walking along San Antonio around 1am Saturday when they were robbed at knifepoint.

Police spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said the victims were on their way to their barracks at the

Sablan compound in San Antonio when two unknown suspects approached them.

One of the suspects was wearing a yellow/orange shirt and the other was wearing a white shirt. The two suddenly poked a knife on the victims’ abdomens and demanded their money.

The suspects reached for the pockets of the victims and took out their wallets. The rob-

bers then took the money inside amounting to some \$700 and immediately fled. The victims ran to the nearby guardhouse at the BOF garment and called for police assistance.

Blas urged anyone with information about the incident to call the NMI Crime Stoppers at 234-7272. Crime Stoppers pays up to \$1,000 for information leading to an arrest. *(Edith G. Alejandro)*

## Court convicts man for sexual abuse of girl

The Superior Court convicted a man for sexually abusing a nine-year-old girl over a year ago.

A six-man jury meted out guilty verdicts on three counts of sexual abuse of a minor in the 2nd degree against Price Shoiter, a former security guard.

Shoiter’s conviction came out Friday after a weeklong trial. Associate Judge Juan T. Lizama

set Shoiter’s sentencing in June.

The jury found that Shoiter sexually abused the girl on three separate days in November 2002. Shoiter was an acquaintance of the girl’s family.

After the jury verdict on the sexual abuse charges, prosecutors Alex Shapiro and Karen Severy asked the court to dismiss the misdemeanor charges against Shoiter.

Lizama granted the request.

“We would like to thank the dedicated professionals who worked with us—[personnel from] the Department of Public Safety, Division of Youth Services and the Attorney General’s Investigative Unit, and also the jurors for providing Mr. Shoiter a fair trial,” Shapiro said. *(John Ravelo)*

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# Opinion

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## EDITORIAL

### Haiti's 'new chapter'

**T**hough he bitterly disappointed Haitians who hoped he would bring democracy and development to the hemisphere's poorest country, Jean-Bertrand Aristide in the end made the right decision. Rather than make a last stand in his capital, he accepted the offer of an American plane trip to exile and opened the way for a U.S.-led international force to end the anarchy overtaking the country. History will likely judge that Mr. Aristide was mostly responsible for his own downfall: He presided over a corrupt government that regularly used violence against its opponents and eventually provoked a violent uprising. But his flight to exile Sunday was forced by the Bush administration, which refused to support international intervention or commit U.S. forces until after Mr. Aristide capitulated. President Bush's declaration Sunday that "the Haitian constitution is working" offered scant cover for the reality that his decisions over the past two weeks had led to the departure of an elected president.

Whether the downfall of Mr. Aristide leads to "a new chapter" and "a hopeful future" for Haiti, as Mr. Bush suggested Sunday, will depend in large measure on how the United States conducts its latest intervention in the country. As a first step, U.S. forces, which were to begin arriving Sunday night, must stop the looting and lawlessness in Port-au-Prince and other cities, and they must ensure that the violent gangs roaming the country—both pro and anti-Aristide—are disarmed and disbanded. Leaders of the armed rebel groups include criminals and former paramilitary operatives from the military dictatorship that preceded Mr. Aristide; they must not be allowed to seize a share of power. Instead, the United States and allies in the Organization of American States and in the Caribbean Community should help to establish a transitional government and organize new democratic elections as soon as possible.

There is much to be learned from the last U.S. effort at stabilizing Haiti a decade ago. U.S. forces left too quickly, and they provided too little training and aid to the police they left behind. Not enough was done to help Haitians build democratic institutions. When Mr. Aristide's party manipulated the results of a congressional election, the United States suspended all further aid to his government, blocked some other development assistance, and delegated the job of finding a political solution to OAS and Caribbean diplomats with little or no leverage.

Without a more concerted effort at nation-building—comparable to that which the United States has supported in the Balkans, or Iraq—the pattern of crisis and foreign intervention in Haiti will not be broken. So far, the administration's approach offers scant grounds for optimism. As the crisis mounted over the past several months, U.S. officials ignored it until violence had spread across the country. Even when it became clear that foreign intervention would be necessary, the administration tried to hand the problem off to France or Canada. Only over the weekend did Mr. Bush finally accept what should have been obvious from the beginning: that the United States must lead any rescue of Haiti.

Now that the Marines are once again to be in Port-au-Prince, we can only hope that Mr. Bush will make a large enough commitment of U.S. resources to ensure that Haiti's next president is democratically chosen—and that he has a fair chance at success.

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## Job opening, some English required

**L**ast week, California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said he supported a constitutional amendment to allow foreign-born Americans to run for president. At first I was puzzled by his interest in this issue, but then I discovered a little-known fact about the man: He was born in Austria. You'd never know it from hearing him talk, but then he is a highly skilled actor.

And he makes a good point: The U.S. Constitution is full of silly, outdated stuff about separating church and state and not putting you in jail without a trial. It's full of lots of 18th-century slang like "freedom" and "privacy."

And one of the silliest things of all is the part where it says foreigners can't be president. Arnold's right. The problem with presidents today is that they come off as a little too... American. We've got that whole cowboy "bring it on" thing goin'. What we need is a presidency injected with a little sensitivity and worldly sophistication. And who better to deliver that than the grab-and-grope action hero from "Jingle All the Way"? Schwarzenegger mentioned the German-born Henry Kissinger as someone who would have made a great president had the Constitution not been in the way—as if that ever stopped Kissinger.

Quite frankly, I think of foreigners as more educated and more socially progressive when it comes to issues such as abortion, euthanasia, birth control, the environment, religion, marriage, materialism, nuclear disarmament, poverty, human rights and life on Earth as we know it. They generally speak at least two languages and have, by definition, traveled outside the United States.

They're also less likely to wear spurs and a 4-foot-tall lime-green Styrofoam cowboy hat to an international conference and call everybody they meet there "Shooter!" Foreigners can't run for president? I believe only foreigners should run for president.

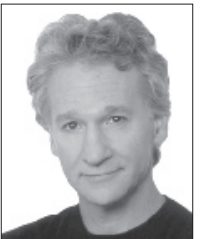
American presidents are like American beer—bland, watered down and advertised to us as if we're morons. They come from boring places like Hope, Ark., Yorba Linda, Calif., and that town in Texas where President Bush was born: New Haven, Conn.

Face it, the presidency is a lousy job. And who does lousy jobs we don't want anymore better than foreigners?

The guy we've got doing it now works only part time. He spends half the day raising money from mining companies and the other

By **BILL MAHER**  
Los Angeles Times

*Maher is host of HBO's "Real Time with Bill Maher."*



half telling schoolchildren that al-Qaida wants them dead, and he's in bed by 7!

The average Frenchman knows more geography than we do. The average Japanese knows more math. And the average Guatemalan is already here, cleaning your house and taking care of your kids. If we can trust them with our children, why not the White House? They can run it and clean it.

As a history buff, I've noticed that of all the worst presidents in U.S. history, every single one of them was an American. Doesn't anyone see a pattern here? Nixon, Carter, Hoover—down the line—Thomas E. Dewey, all native-born Americans. Which only goes to show that sometimes ethnic profiling ... well, sometimes it's just a matter of common sense.

Just once I'd like my president, the nation's president, to be like one of those presidents Italy always has, with the expensive suits and the permanent tan and the Versace mistress, and there's photos of them canoodling on a boat but nobody cares because hey, that's "amore." Our guy gets impeached. In Italy, the stock market goes up.

It comes down to this: British people just sound better than we do. When they ask Tony Blair about weapons of mass destruction, the stuff he pulls out of his hat always sounds so much better than the stuff Bush pulls out of his hat. We're Americans, don't we deserve the best?

It's too late to undo the injustice that kept foreign-born presidential timber like Madeleine Albright and William Shatner out of the White House. But think of the future!

The job of president is just too important to be left to an American.

# A prisoner in my own home

By **FRANCES ANN D. AMOG**

**D**o you know what it feels like to be a prisoner in your own home? Ironically, that which you call “home” does not recognize you as its own. You are not a citizen. You are not even considered a resident. You cannot leave for fear of not being allowed to enter upon your return. You have no right to vote in general elections. And, as a student, you are considered “ineligible” to apply for the different scholarships and grants needed for graduating seniors who wish to continue their studies in the U.S. And you cannot partake in all the privileges that are granted to those who hold what you do not—a U.S. passport. In the end, that is the only thing that separates you from everybody else. And that is what keeps you a “prisoner” in your own home.

My name is Frances Ann Donato Amog, born on October 31, 1982 on the beautiful island of Saipan, and one of many children recognized as “stateless.” I have lived my whole life on the island, embracing the culture and its people as my own. Saipan is home to me. It is all I have ever known. And it is where I one day hope to raise a family of my own. For so long, I was unaware that the island I call home does not recognize me as its own. During my senior year, the Board of Elections came to school to register all the seniors in the hopes of encouraging youths to exercise our right to vote in the upcoming general elections. Instead of filling out a form so that I could partake in the elections,

I sat back and watched my friends fill out theirs because I was deemed ineligible to vote. I could not participate in an event that would determine the direction the island was headed in the near future. I could not participate in voting for those who I know in my heart would do a great job. I knew those who ran for offices. I grew up watching them around the island. I went to school with their children. Yet I was still ineligible. It is a lonely feeling filled with despair when I finally realized how different I was.

In addition to that, I could not travel abroad. While my friends headed off to the states for family vacations, I spent every summer I knew on the island, enjoying all that the island offered. I attended the annual carnival and saw movies with friends. I watched the parade every Fourth of July with my family. I could not even travel to Guam for fear of not being allowed to enter because of my status, and the even bigger fear of not being able to return home. I felt as though I were being punished for something I had no control over, for something borne out of circumstance. I was not allowed to leave, or to ever step foot off the island, because there was always the risk of not being able to return home even though I was born there.

And lastly, as a “stateless” child, I lost any chance to further my studies in the U.S. despite having graduated at the top of my class. I worked so hard throughout high school, maintaining an A-average, hoping that I would have the chance to study in the states. During my senior year, I began looking at several colleges and universities in the States, namely Gonzaga University and Seattle University in

Washington. However, when attempting to apply for scholarships and grants, I noticed that every single one required U.S. citizenship, which I did not have. The only thing I was eligible for was a foreign student financial aid. I was heartbroken. I had such high hopes to attend college in the U.S. but I couldn’t. On graduation night, I walked away with several awards and no scholarship or grant. I should have been one of the first off to college, but instead, I watched my friends and classmates embark on their own journey, each filled with excitement. I was engulfed in a sea of loneliness because I noticed the uncertainty of my future due to the circumstances that surrounded my status.

I try so hard not to let my “status” and all the missed opportunities I’ve encountered get the best of me. I try not to focus on the fact that my home, in retrospect, has refused me as its own. I look away from graduation night and all that I could have been and look at all the possibilities instead. All I wanted was to take all the knowledge I wish to learn in a good university, and bring it back home. Bring it back to a place I hold dear to me, back home to the island of Saipan. However, I can’t leave. Yet, I can’t partake in events such as general elections that may very well affect me. This is what it feels like to be a prisoner in your own home. This is what it feels like to be “stateless.”

*Frances graduated valedictorian from the Mount Carmel School in 2000. She lives in San Antonio with her parents, Isabelita and Pablito Amog.*

## So much irony in this Passion

By **PAUL RICHARD**

Special to The Washington Post

**I**f Protestant Americans, diverse as they are, can be said to share a symbol, it has to be the clean-cut cross of Jesus they so liberally display. Hallmark puts it on cards, churches set it atop spires, celebrities hang it in their bling-bling. It’s out there in our image-world, standing crisp and white. Like other symbols, it is a weapon, and it has a history.

There are mysteries in its meanings, but not in its look. Its look is obvious: The whiteness stands for purity; the brightness for the Light. And that exact rectilinearity, 90 degrees, right on, points toward God, because it’s perfect. This cross is not the crucifix of the Roman Catholic church. No Jesus hangs on it. He’s already resurrected. No nail holes, no adze-marks, no gall-and-vinegar stains soil this immaculate abstraction. It’s no more of flesh than a diagram in a book of geometry. It’s been cleansed. It’s been washed of blood.

What hasn’t been washed of blood, what bathes in it, is “The Passion of the Christ,” which may be the bloodiest movie ever. Blood gets so much screen time in Mel Gibson’s film—for its oozings and its spurtings and its smearing of the wall—that it becomes the picture’s star. “The Passion” is a torture flick, intentionally Baroque. Its look comes less from Scripture than it does from Counter-Reformation painting.

These two visions have competed through the centuries. The Protestant Reformation stripped the cross clean. Counter-Reformation art answered by pulling out all the visual stops to defend the Catholic Church while confounding the Protestants’ aesthetics. The paintings Gibson imitates shared a propagandistic purpose. They were weapons in the wars between Protestants and Catholics that swept through Northern Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries. And these weren’t merely culture wars. They were sword-and-cannon battles in which countless people died.

And yet American evangelicals and fundamentalists—the Reformation’s children—are flocking to see “The Passion of the Christ.” The Rev. Billy Graham has called Gibson’s film “a lifetime of sermons in one movie,” though the difference, a big one, is that sermons come in words while movies do their work through the viewer’s eye. Protestants around the country are buying blocks of tickets. Out in Santa Rosa, Calif., a pastor named Andy Vom Steeg has sent out 10,000 postcards asking people in the region to see the Gibson movie and discuss it at his church.

All of which seems a little curious, and not just art-historically. There’s been an aesthetic flip: Hard-core, clean-cross Protestants would once have been appalled, en masse, by the Counter-Reformation style and its message. Now many lap it up.

Gibson’s action may be set in 1st-century Jerusalem, but his style comes from 17th-century Rome.

Special-effect skies, gleams from brass and leather, swirling darks and lights, heart-rending emoting—Rome’s militantly Catholic painters, and their peers in Spain and Flanders, went straight for the gut, and did so through the viewer’s responding eye. Gibson does the same. His Mary and Magdalene, shown in tear-streaked close-ups gazing dolorously upward, look just like Guido Reni’s. And when Gibson calls his film “a moving Caravaggio” it is because its swirlings, its gritty realism, its dark palette, and its scenes side-lit by torches come straight from Caravaggio’s paintings. In the 1950s, Hollywood’s Jesuses sported spotless white cashmere robes and shampooed hair, but Caravaggio dressed his figures in rags of sober hue. So does Gibson. Gibson needs these references because his movie is so gory. There is only so much you can do to hurt human flesh, but when the film has done enough, it does a whole lot more. The artiness is there to soften our disgust. Over his movie’s bloodiness Gibson has poured the sort of golden glow that rises through the yellowed varnish of Old Master paintings. And beneath his gore he shows us the many ripe conventions of Counter-Reformation art.

Martin Luther’s Reformation was a theological rebellion. At its core was a refusal. No longer would the rebels accept the pope in Rome, or the hierarchy he led, or the Latin of the Mass and of the Vulgate Bible, which most of them could neither read nor understand. If they themselves could read the Bible (which Luther soon began to translate into German), they could find their way to God with the aid of faith alone. They didn’t need the pope, they didn’t need his saints, they didn’t need his priests, and—as some began insisting—they didn’t need his art.

The more the reformers valorized the Word, the more they turned away from images. The most extreme among them—the “image-breakers,” the iconoclasts—saw it as their duty to smash the sensual power—the scary, popish power—they sensed in Catholic art.

For the Pilgrims of East Anglia, the Huguenots of France, and the Calvinists of the Netherlands, Counter-Reformation art smacked of popishness, idolatry, unrestrained excess. They knew what the Counter-Reformation was counter to—it was counter to them. Its art, they understood, was devised to dent their scruples and to undo their aesthetic. They did not take it lying down.

On Aug. 10, 1566, at Steenvoorde in Flanders, a Calvinist preacher named Sebastian Matte told his listeners to go and smash the art in Catholic churches. Ten days afterward, the cathedral at Antwerp was methodically trashed (though later, under Catholic rule, Rubens was commissioned to re-do its splendor).

Such spasms of enthusiastic image-breaking erupted in the British Isles for most of the next century. “Lord, what work was here!” lamented the Bishop of Norwich in 1647. “What clattering of glasses! What beating down of walls!”

Think of all art destroyed, the statues with their heads knocked off, the broken stained-glass windows. Think of all the churches, especially in the Netherlands, with their murals whitewashed out.

Hatred was involved, of course, in destructions such as these. Class issues, and politics, and imperial disputes were also much in play, but so, too, was a scruple as old as monotheism—a fear of basely materializing the ungraspable Divine.

Most of the Protestant image-breakers, busily whitewashing and smashing, were confident that they had Scripture on their side. In Exodus 20, after all, God is pretty specific: “Thou shall not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.” And Jesus was cited, too: “Blessed are they,” he tells us in John 20:29, “that have not seen and yet have believed.”

If American Protestantism can be said to have a visual style, this preference for the cleansed, the stripped-down, the ascetic, must be one of its chief strands. That plainness is still seen in the clean, white clapboard churches scattered through New England, in the Quaker meeting houses of Pennsylvania, all the way to the Crystal Cathedral in Orange County, Calif. No Catholic paintings taint these sanctuaries. Billy Sunday’s revival tent wasn’t hung with gilded frames. The Little Brown Church in the Vale, famous through song, is a structure without paintings. In Protestant America they’ve been absent from the start.

And now along comes Gibson, returning to center stage the vivid Catholic imagery—sensual, argumentative, Marian and Latinate—of Counter-Reformation art.

He is, no doubt, sincere. But then the Aztec priests who ripped out human hearts were pretty sincere, too. So are the flagellants who still bloody themselves for God in so many Shiite and Spanish-speaking countries. The act of seeking the divine through blood and gruesome suffering didn’t start with Gibson. It must be immensely old.

Many contemporary Protestants will approve of Gibson’s movie, and I bet they won’t be thinking of 17th-century Italian art, or popish propaganda, Calvinist image-breaking, or anything like that. That reviled mainstream Hollywood is taking Scripture seriously will fill their hearts with hope. That Gibson is a Roman Catholic, and a pre-Vatican II traditionalist, will not be held against him. He’s a conservative and a star.

*The author has written about art for The Post since 1967.*





## SPECIAL MEETING

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. Board of Directors holds a special meeting Monday to discuss pressing issues such as the water desalination project, power plant privatization, and employees retroactive pay, among others.

LIBERTY DONES

# 500-lb vintage bomb found on Rota

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

The Emergency Management Office has sought a permit from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to conduct retrieval and detonation of vintage ordnance on Rota, including a 500-lb bomb recently discovered on the reef line at the vicinity of As Dudo.

The EMO had also asked the

U.S. Navy's Explosives Ordnance Disposal unit to facilitate the project sometime next week.

The ordnance include another 500-lb bomb that was discovered in As Nieves—also known as As Kamachili—and two 250-lb bombs that were found in Sabana.

EMO director Rudolfo Pua also sought the assistance of local emergency responders in

carrying out the project, including those from the Coastal Resources Management Office.

"All these live unexploded ordnance present a threat to life and property," Pua said.

The detonation site would be at the As Matmos area, where the Navy had previously detonated vintage ordnance retrieved from different parts of the island.

The Navy had detonated vintage ordnance in As Matmos in

early December 2003. The ordnance included a 500-lb bomb.

Last March 12, the Navy detonated over 1,000 lbs. of World War II ordnance at the foot of the Marpi cliff on Saipan. The Navy also detonated vintage ordnance at the Marpi site last Nov. 18.

The islands were a battleground during World War II, leaving unexploded ordnance in many areas.

## PATIENTS

From Page 1

the CNMI government has already exhausted its credit limit.

"...[This] disallowed them from purchasing airline tickets. Because of this, they claimed they could not assist the MRO," Borja told the health secretary.

The office of the Governor's Special Assistant for Administration reportedly called the travel agency and verified the situation.

Borja disclosed that he also spoke with travel agencies confirming the government's outstanding GTRs.

MRO reportedly owes

Pacific Sky Travel some \$40,253.42 and MITA Travel some \$33,481.76.

"They could not afford to issue more airline tickets at this time until they are paid. They are willing to work on a payment plan provided that they are paid on time," he said.

The acting MRO chief also

learned that the CNMI travel agencies reportedly convened last March 16 for a meeting to discuss the government's overdue GTRs.

Following this meeting, Borja said, the travel agencies discontinued issuing airline tickets to medical referral patients.

cheaper than the current commercial water rate.

He said that given Taekwang's proposed rate of \$8 per 1,000 gallons, plus some administrative costs of \$2 to \$3, residents would be paying \$11 to \$12 per 1,000 gallons of potable water.

The CUC received proposals from Taekwang, Mitsui USA, GET Inc., and Telesource.

## 24-HOUR

From Page 1

"We'd make sure that it's satisfactory to the people and to the board. Yes, we'd include cost analysis of the project," he said.

Sablan's statements came amid reports of ongoing negotiations between the CUC and Saipan Taekwang, which was chosen as the most responsive

among four proposers.

The former president of the now defunct Saipan University, Jess Taisague, pushed in yesterday's meeting for the immediate provision of a 24-hour potable water supply.

"For years we've been suffering from water shortage. I support any move to make sure that I get potable water 24 hours," he said.

He said he has been spending \$30 a month to buy bottled water for drinking purposes.

"This is on top of \$11 I'm paying CUC every month," he said.

"So whatever the case may be [desalination or water drilling], the bottom line is the community needs 24-hour water," he said.

Earlier, chairman Sablan said desalinized water would be

## ONE

From Page 1

added that Camacho is a former police officer.

In a separate accident, two female pedestrians sustained fractures and abrasions to the body after a pickup truck hit them while they were crossing Gualo Rai Friday night.

The victims were identi-

fied as Song Hua Jun, 23, and Ming Ji Piao, 32, while the driver of the 1998 Toyota pickup was identified as Gang Yong Zhang, 24.

Police department spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said the incident happened around 8:43pm along 2W Gualo Rai by the Shell service station and the Pizza Hut area.

Investigators said that Zhang's

vehicle was traveling north on the outer lane of 2W Gualo Rai when another vehicle in the inner lane stopped. Zhang paralleled with the other vehicle when three pedestrians darted out in front of him.

In an attempt to avoid the pedestrians, the pickup truck swerved to the right but it was too late, hitting two of the three pedestrians.

Jin sustained a fractured pelvis and abrasions in the face, hands and feet while Piao sustained abrasions in the face and complained of pain on her hips. The two were admitted to the CHC.

According to the investigators, the pedestrians were at fault for crossing at an unmarked location and failure to yield to the right of vehicles.

# World Bank expert to help CNMI assess the value of its coral reefs

By JOHN RAVELO  
REPORTER

A senior economist from the World Bank will be visiting the CNMI in connection with efforts to come up with a valuation of the Commonwealth's coastal and coral reef resources.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has contracted economist John Dixon to visit the CNMI from March 30 to April 1, according to Coastal Resources Management Office acting director Becky Cruz-Lizama.

"Mr. Dixon's role will be to interview representatives of stakeholder groups and decision makers to better understand their interests, needs and concerns regarding the valuation of the CNMI's coastal and coral reef resources," Lizama said.

After these stakeholder meetings, Lizama said Dixon will work with key CNMI staff to translate the findings into a professional scope of work and request for proposals for a CNMI Coral Reef Economic Valuation.

Lizama has asked Sen. Luis Crisostomo, who chairs the Senate Committee on Resources, Economic Development and Program, and Rep.

Janet Maratita, House Committee on Natural Resources chair, for their input.

A workshop about coral reef economic valuation will be held at the public library's conference room next Tuesday to discuss the goals and benefits of the valuation project. Lizama said a consultant group would eventually be hired to conduct the valuation project.

The CNMI is a member to the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force, an inter-agency collaboration formed by then President Bill Clinton in 1998 to address the crisis in coral reefs.

Lizama, the CNMI's point-of-contact to the task force, recently attended the task force meeting in Washington D.C., where she asked the task force's support for the CNMI's priority infrastructure needs as part of efforts to protect coral reefs.

The task force has underscored the importance of protecting coral reefs, which cover less than 1 percent of the Earth's surface.

"Coral reefs are valuable assets providing food, jobs, protection from storms and billions of dollars in revenues each year to local communities and national economies," the task force said.

## WOMAN

From Page 1

Instead, he said, it was signed by the employer's daughter, Cynthia Manglona Corpuz.

Santiago has been employed by Nicolas M. Manglona since 1996 as administrative assistant. Manglona, it was learned during a hearing, died in December 2001.

Apparently, Cody said, the employer and his wife had lived in Idaho from 1996 until 2001. During that time, Santiago managed the employer's three houses on Saipan.

DOL said Santiago is the sister of the employer's wife, Esperanza S. Manglona.

DOL said that after the death, the wife continued "to operate" the business on Saipan from Idaho but she never officially informed the department about her husband's death, nor did she ever apply to become the official employer of record for Santiago.

DOL said that sometime in 2002, the employer's daughter, Corpuz, began to manage the business on Saipan. In Oct. 2003, the daughter relocated to the Philippines with her husband.

In his decision, Cody said the facts of the case "are disturbing" as the family business was operated under the deceased's name for nearly two years.

He said that while Santiago's

transfer relief is granted, it should be deferred pending an investigation on the case.

Cody said that Santiago is implicated in the case even as she admitted that she was involved in the "document handling" portion of the business.

"I believe that a review should be conducted regarding the legitimacy of this employment and the conduct of non-resident Emma Santiago and the relatives of Nicolas Manglona," Cody said.

Cody cited that in the notice of denial, the department alleged that Santiago "operated her own business using this permit."

"While this may or may not be true, an investigation is required in order for the 'facts' to be developed," he said, noting that the department should at a minimum examine the original employment contract between the parties, tax records for the past seven years, and bank records to determine whether the business was conducted legitimately, or constituted simply a 'sponsorship' for Santiago.

Cody said that assessing relative fault in the case was problematic. On one hand, he said, the employer's wife and daughter were at fault. On the other hand, Santiago was responsible for the document handling of the company; therefore, she is not blameless, having gone along with the situation.



# 14 teachers awarded new funding

## \$34K handed to teachers for classroom spending

Gov. Juan N. Babauta announced yesterday the award of another 11 Teacher Performance Improvement Grants amounting to \$34,781 to 14 Public School System teachers.

The 14 teachers, who will receive the funding either individually or in groups, wrote the

grant proposals that are receiving funding from the governor as part of the Governor's Education Initiative.

Grant selections are made by an independent panel of five teachers.

"We saw some very creative proposals in this round," Babauta said.

"This is precisely what Teacher Performance Improvement Grants are supposed to do: encourage creativity and inject some new excitement about learning into our public school system.

"I was also very glad to see strong participation from Rota because this is a Common-

wealth-wide initiative," said the governor. Four of the 11 grants went to the Commonwealth's southernmost island.

This is the second of four rounds of Teacher Performance Improvement grants. The deadline for submission for the third round is May 7.

Grantees were selected from 29 grant proposals by a review panel of 5 teachers. In order to be eligible, grants must show a link to improved student academic performance and have a method to evaluate whether improvement has taken place. Grants are also favorably scored if they demonstrate creativity and imagination, pushing the bounds of the normal methods

being used in PSS. A fourth factor in grant selection is whether there is no funding for the proposal through the regular PSS budget allocations to teachers.

Grant criteria, deadlines, and other information can be obtained by calling the Office of the Governor at 664-2200 and asking for information on the Teacher Performance Improvement Grants.

## The 14 grants' recipients

**Grantee:** Dawndra Wilburn  
**School:** Rota High School  
**Grant Title:** Replenish Book Sets  
**Amount:** \$2,500.00

Description: Replenish books missing from sets used by students studying English in order to improve reading ability. This will ensure that each individual student has a copy of the book being studied.

**Grantee:** James Dalsaso  
**School:** Marianas High School  
**Grant Title:** Geology/Oceanography Lab Equipment  
**Amount:** \$2,500.00

Description: Refurbish aquaria in the lab, purchase rock and mineral samples along with mineral identification kits, provide underwater camera for collecting and projector for displaying visual information.

**Grantee:** Juliet T. Macabenta  
Magdalena Mesngon  
Rosalin Mendiola  
**School:** Sinapalo Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Learning Centers  
**Amount:** \$7,500.00

Description: Establishing learning centers in three elementary school classrooms to include tools and materials for a variety of subject areas (literacy skills puzzle, reading for comprehension, calculators, dissectible human torso, nutrition kit, weather kit).

**Grantee:** Roselle Ichihara  
**School:** Oleai Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Listening Centers  
**Amount:** \$2,500.00

Description: Provides 10 listening career sets with headsets and cassette decks to allow primary students to follow along with written text to facilitate reading comprehension and learning. Also, provides two learning carpets to create the listening center space.

**Grantee:** Caroline M. Lutu  
**School:** San Antonio Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Enhancing a Child's Writing Creativity  
**Amount:** \$2,495.00

Description: Permit purchase of Kidspiration software that uses visual tools to encourage improved organization, brainstorming, and narrative flow in writing. The grant also provides for two printers to allow students to see their completed work in hard copy.

**Grantee:** Dora B. Miura  
Merly Yamazaki  
**School:** San Antonio Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Real-Life Connections  
**Amount:** \$5,000.00

Description: 6th grade students will break into explorational teams (e.g., oceanographers, environmentalists, marine biologists, sociologists) each with a specific data collection task (e.g., water currents, human impact on beaches, oceanic life, cultural life). Two additional teams

will make a film record of the exploration and prepare a report for distribution through the Pacific Voices network. The project will take place on Saipan and Rota; students will compare and contract findings between these locations. Proposal includes parental contribution.

**Grantee:** Theresa Barrow  
**School:** San Antonio Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Enhancing a Child's Writing Creativity  
**Amount:** \$2,500.00

Description: Permit purchase of Kidspiration software that uses visual tools to encourage improved organization, brainstorming, and narrative flow in writing. The grant also provides for 2 printers to allow students to see their completed work in hardcopy.

**Grantee:** Sina Church  
**School:** San Antonio Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Interactive Teaching  
**Amount:** \$2,319.00

Description: For purchase of Elmo projector that allows presentation of a variety of materials, specimens, and other physical and graphical examples to be viewed by the entire 5th grade class and to be observed as manipulated. Student-groups will also be required to prepare presentations employing the Elmo display system.

**Grantee:** Brian Jones  
**School:** Marianas High School  
**Grant Title:** Media/Video Technology  
**Amount:** \$2,498.00

Description: High school students will produce a video series depicting the cultural lifestyles, beliefs, attitudes and values of teenagers in the NMI. The series will be used to orient newly-hired PSS teachers and to improve communication and understanding between teachers and students.

**Grantee:** Enterina A. Calvo  
**School:** Sinapalo Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Technology Tools  
**Amount:** \$2,500.00

Description: Although Sinapalo School is wired for Internet access, the majority of classrooms do not have computers to take advantage of that capability. The grant provides for two computers to enable students to have the opportunity to use the Internet for research and to bring materials and information into the class that would not otherwise be available.

**Grantee:** Daisy Atalig  
**School:** Sinapalo Elementary School  
**Grant Title:** Healthy Body and Healthy Mind  
**Amount:** \$2,469.00

Description: The goal of this proposal is to instill a lifelong appreciation and practice of behaviors that promotes health. 1st grade students will maintain an electronic portfolio in which they record of their weekly eating and exercise activity. A year-end presentation will be made for parents, teachers and other students.



**'BEAR' IN MIND**  
DPS Capt. Pete Muna engages San Vicente 6th Grade students in a Question and Answer period after he read to them articles on public safety and proper behavior. The month of March is a PSS-wide Be Enthusiastic About Reading (BEAR) focus. Parents and community leaders read to students in their classrooms to highlight the crucial role reading skill plays in quality life issues, not to mention survival in the work place. Reading levels nationwide and in the Commonwealth are below average.

covenant



# Poetic Tinian elementary student wins

The recent Chamorro Language Competition—Fino' Chamorro Na Kompetasion—sponsored by and held at the University of Guam had participants from Guam and the Northern Marianas competing for top honors.

One student in particular, 6th grader Vicente V. Sablan, won 1st Place in Poetry Recitation-Middle School Division (6th to 8th Grade) a huge accomplishment in itself considering Sablan was competing with a large group of students.

Sablan's poem "Baba I Korason-Mu" (Open Your Heart) is a result of his Social Studies class. They were discussing about slavery in the American history and how prejudice played a big part in it. His teacher, Virgie Sarangelo, integrated the lesson with Language Arts and asked the students to write a poem about the discussion.

Sablan originally wrote the poem in English. When the competition was announced, his teacher recommended that he translate it to Chamorro and enter his school level.

The young Sablan, assisted by his Chamorro teachers Melissa Aquiningoc and Jose Manibusan, translated his writing to Chamorro. He competed against eight other students at

Tinian Elementary and won the opportunity to represent Tinian in the Language competition.

Second grade teacher Rita Cruz, TES principal Julian Hofschneider, and Manibusan helped coach Sablan for his competition on Guam.

The Poetry Recitation 6th-8th Grade Division was held at the University of Guam Lecture Hall. Sablan place first against six or seven other schools, all from Guam. Most of the 9th – 12th Grade competitions were held at the Fine Arts Theatre.

Other winners from the CNMI PSS:

□ Rota High School group garnered first place in the 9th – 12th Grade Song & Dance Category.

□ Rota High School's Lucille Barcinas Hocog garnered 1st place in the 9th – 12th Grade Oratorical Category.

□ Krystal Ann Pereda, also from RHS, garnered 2nd in the 9th – 12th Grade Poetry Recitation

□ Joshua S. Duenas, from Marianas High School, was the 3rd place winner for both 9th – 12th Grade Poetry Recitation and Oratorical Divisions.

Special thanks are being extended to Frances Sablan from the Pacific Island Bilingual Bicultural



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Tinian Elementary School 6th grader Vicente V. Sablan poses with his award after winning 1st Place in Poetry Recitation-Middle School Division (6th to 8th Grade) at the University of Guam.

Association-CNMI Chapter and members for providing the funds for one student from each island (Rota, Tinian, & Saipan); Jess

## Baba I Korason – Mu

By Vicente V. Sablan

Baba I korason-mu para nuebu na korason  
Baba I korason-mu para hita yan siha  
Baba I korason-mu para I ti parehu-ta  
Sa' un diha uma' cho'gue parehu

Baba I korason-mu para I munisisita  
Pues todos hit ta baba I korason-ta  
Ya un dia tafan hita todos parehu

Ti put I lasâ-ta  
Ti put I kulot-ta  
Ti put I kutturâ-ta  
Maseha ti man parehu hit  
Maseha ti man attungo' hit

Tafan a'go'ti kânnai ya tafan unu  
Tafan a'chettun para un mâs metgot na familia  
Para un mâs metgot na nasion  
Sa' un baba I korason-mu

*Editor's Note: This poem won Tinian Elementary's 6th grader Vicente V. Sablan 1st Place in Poetry Recitation-Middle School Division (6th to 8th Grade) during the recent Chamorro Language Competition—Fino' Chamorro Na Kompetasion—held at the University of Guam.*

Elameto, PSS Bilingual Coordinator, and to the Tinian Mayor's Office for providing the funding for the airfare and accommodations for the TES chaperone and parent chaperone. Special thanks to the coordinators of the

event, Pete Onedera and Rosa Palomo and their assistants, for their hospitality, and also to Vince Manglona and the rest of the CNMI/Guam Liaison Staff for the wonderful dinner. (**Julian Hofschneider**)

## Disability council meets with legislators

The CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities will present to the Legislature today its program, updates of national and local public notices affecting persons with disabilities and their families; as well as updates of national and local issues needing congressional attention.

The presentation will be

held at the Raraina Restaurant of the Aqua Resort Club from 11:30pm to 1:30pm.

The council is a CNMI systems change advocacy agency for people with developmental disabilities and has the function and responsibility to provide information to policymakers by supporting and conducting studies and

analyses, gathering information, and developing and disseminating model policies and procedures, information, approaches, strategies, findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The council may provide the information directly to federal, state and local policymakers, including the U.S. Congress, the

Federal executive branch, the CNMI governor, CNMI Legislature and state agencies, in order to increase the ability of such policymakers to offer opportunities and to enhance or adapt generic services to meet the needs of, or provide specialized services to, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.

## Cook Islands population drops nearly 17 percent

**RAROTONGA, Cook Islands** (The Cook Islands Herald/PIR)—By the year 2021, the resident population of the Cook Islands could be as low as 5,718, according to a worst case scenario predicted following the census in 2001

Provisional figures from the census conducted in 2001 show that the resident population of the Cook Islands fell from 18,071 in 1996 to 15,017 in 2001 – a drop of 16.9 percent

Meanwhile, a prediction that the country's population will continue to fall until the year 2011 has heightened growing concerns.

Of three scenarios based on different assumptions relating to fertility, mortality and migration rates, one predicts an increase in resident population by year 2021 while two other scenarios predict a further decrease.

Of the three scenarios which predict the size of the resident population by the year 2021, one scenario puts the resident

population at 15,492. A second scenario puts the total at 10,387 and the third scenario has the total at 5,718 by 2021.

All three scenarios have some common assumptions, including:

□ The resident population will decline until the year 2011.

□ The population aged 15 and younger in 2021 will be proportionally and in absolute numbers lower than in 2001.

□ The proportion of the working age population in 2021 will be higher than in 2001.

□ The dependency ratio in 2021 will be considerably lower than in 2001.

□ Those 60 years and older will proportionally and in absolute numbers increase.

□ The median age of the population will have increased.

Between December 2001 and November 2003, some 19,912 residents departed and 18,191 arrived – A net migration loss of 1,721 residents, census figures show.

## Palau festival poses transportation problem

**KOROR, Palau** (PDN/PIR)—Advance teams from nearly 30 Pacific countries, territories and island groups are here to discuss the coming Festival of Pacific Arts. The teams were pleased with the preparations, Palau President Tommy Remengesau said.

But there was one major concern among many teams: how to get their people here for the July event, Remengesau said.

Visitors travel to Palau through limited flights out of airports in Guam, Manila, Taipei and Tokyo. For South Pacific islands, where the majority of participants originate, those airports are out of the way and would involve numerous connecting flights.

"Their big concern is travel time and cost," Remengesau said.

The event, which begins on July 22 and wraps up on July 31 under a full moon, brings Pacific islanders together every four years to celebrate and preserve their unique heritage.

Since it began in 1972, the event site has rotated between Polynesian and the Melanesian islands.

As of last Thursday, there are expected to be 2,500 participants traveling to Palau for the 2004 festival, said Yvonne Singeo, secretary for the Belau Organizing Committee. The majority will stay in schools converted into dormitories, she said.

The hotels—and about 1,000 rooms—also are nearly fully booked, Singeo said. There also will be home stays and yachts in Palau for the festival. The total number of spectators is unknown.

But it should be a packed house in Palau, as long as people can get here.

Remengesau said a new regional airline expected to start flying in April or May is open to adding flights from Darwin, Australia, to Palau. The airline, Palau Micronesia Air, already plans to fly twice a week from that city, but could possibly add flights to accommodate partici-

## Fiji scrapes to attend Commonwealth meeting

**SUVA, Fiji** (FijiSUN/PIR)—Fiji's Parliamentary Secretariat will draw \$20,000 from its reserves to send three delegates to the annual Commonwealth Parliamentary Association in Canada in September.

Officials say financial assistance will be sought from the Ministry of Finance should the Secretariat fail to meet the total cost of the trip. It is also understood that the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association will help pay expenses for the annual meeting.

The 11-day conference of the Association is scheduled for September where Speaker of the Lower House Ratu Epeli Nailatikau will preside as vice chair.

Accompanying him will be two parliamentarians. Media liaison officer Alifereti Bulivou said the Speaker will select one member from each side of the House.

Bulivou said the conference was important because it provided the opportunity to highlight the country's progress to parliamentary democracy and Fiji's continued support for the institutions of Parliament.

"Fiji has twice lost its memberships of the Commonwealth either through suspension or expulsion. On our return to parliamentary democracy in October 2001 following the political crisis of 2000, our membership status on the Commonwealth has been fully restored," Bulivou said.

"Hosting a plenary conference will provide Fiji with an opportunity to highlight the progress it has made on its return to parliamentary democracy"

And while Fiji will host next year's CPA meeting where Ratu Epeli will chair the international annual event, the agenda will be finalized by the executive committee meet in Uganda next month.

Fiji has been a member of the association since its independence in 1970.

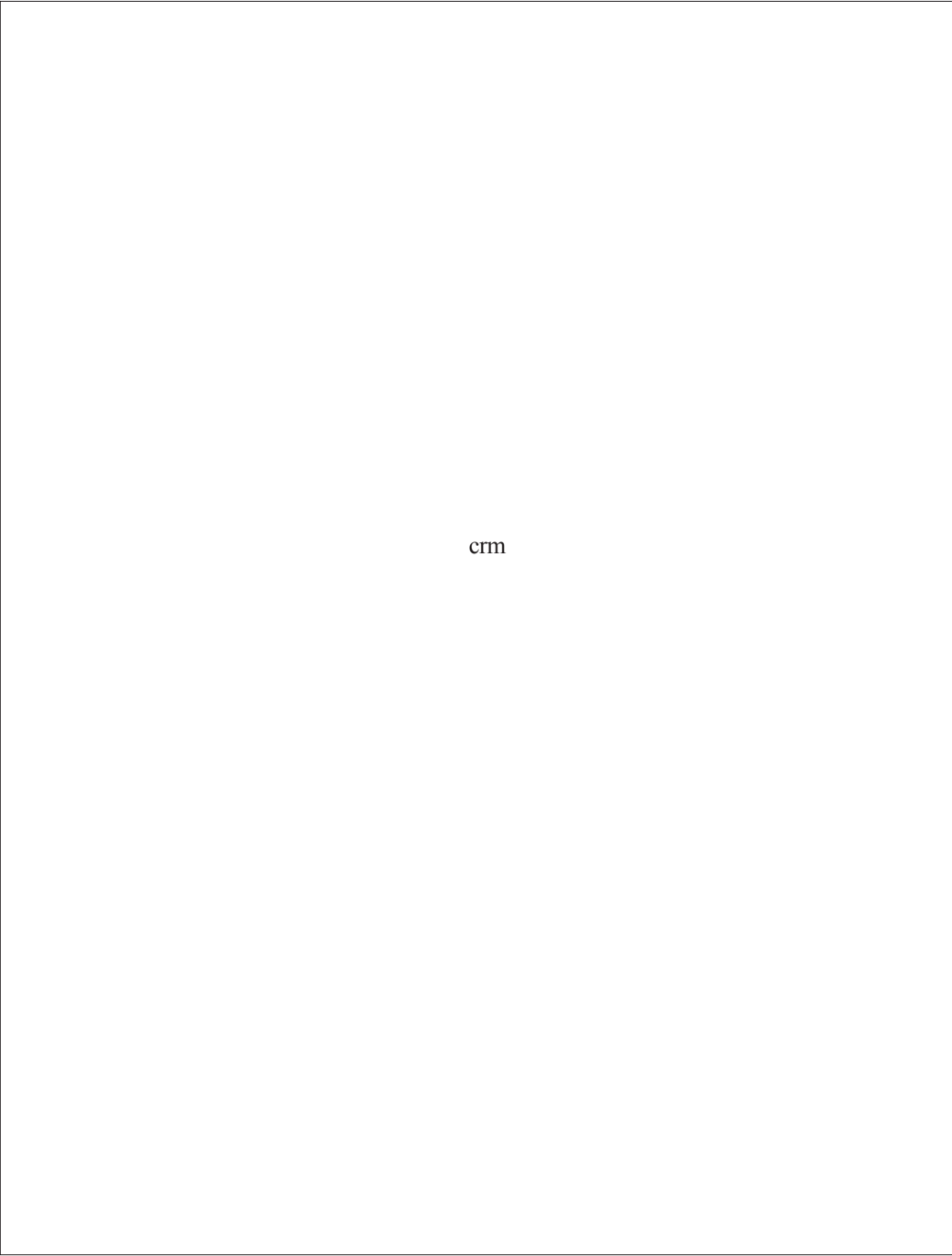
During the September meet, the Fiji delegation will be exposed to members of parliament from all commonwealth countries and observers of international organizations, Mr Bulivou said.

"The conference will offer a further opportunity following its successful hosting of the ACP Leaders meeting in 2002 to show its commitment to being a member of the international community of nations with the ability to host major international functions.

"The Government will be given the opportunity to highlight and raise issues of national importance to an international audience comprising delegates, observers and members of the international media. As this is a national event, the Opposition and community leaders also have a role in the conference," Mr Bulivou said.



# Business



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# Wal-Mart tops Fortune 500 list again

By MICHAEL P. REGAN  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

**NEW YORK (AP)**—A tail wind of improving economic conditions blew many major companies to record revenues in 2003, but none was able to knock Wal-Mart Stores Inc. off the top of the Fortune 500 list.

With sales of almost \$259 billion - nearly a quarter of a trillion dollars - the late Sam Walton's global chain of general stores topped the list of the nation's largest publicly traded companies for the third straight year. There was some predictable shuffling among the rest of the top 10.

Fortune's annual ranking, to be published in the magazine's April 5 edition, is based on the companies'

sales figures as reported in financial statements for 2003.

Jittery geopolitics kept the price of oil high, helping Exxon Mobil Corp. to post \$213 billion in revenue. The 17 percent jump leapfrogged the oil company past General Motors Corp. into the No. 2 spot.

In terms of profits, Exxon Mobil was first with \$21.5 billion in earnings. Wal-Mart, which has the lower profit margins of the retailing industry, had \$9.05 billion in earnings.

Carmakers GM and Ford Motor Co. came in third and fourth respectively, with revenues of \$196 billion and \$164 billion. General Electric Co., the provider of everything from jet engines to sit-coms, remained at No. 5 with revenue of \$134 billion.

Both Ford and GE held their spots from 2002.

ChevronTexaco Corp. moved up a spot to No. 6, while another refiner, ConocoPhillips, jumped five spots to No. 7. Banking powerhouse Citigroup Inc. was eighth, followed by International Business Machines Corp. and insurer American International Group, Inc.

As a group, the 500 companies bounced back from two years of profit declines, posting combined earnings of almost \$446 billion on sales totaling \$7.5 trillion.

"Making the accomplishment even sweeter was the fact that few observers had expected it," wrote Fortune's Janice Revell.

Profits grew in 34 of the 39 industries that Fortune tracks. And only 37 of the 500 companies disappointed shareholders

with negative returns, which the magazine calculated by adding the change in a company's stock price to its dividend income.

Fortune credited barely-there interest rates, fewer accounting scandals, tax cuts and increased government spending as helping to power the blue chip boom. And although the war in Iraq kept oil prices high all year, the quick end to major fighting gave companies confidence, according to Fortune.

Conspicuously absent was mortgage giant Freddie Mac, No. 32 on the 2002 list. That's because its most recent financial statements were unavailable due to an accounting scandal.

One impressive jump was made by investor Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway Inc. The rallying stock market helped

the Omaha-based holding company jump from 28th place to 14th with revenue of \$64 billion.

This year marks the 50th time Fortune has published its annual rankings. A look at the original 500 reveals some familiar names - in 1955, General Motors was No. 1, General Electric No. 4, Chrysler No. 6 and Du Pont No. 10.

The No. 2 company was Standard Oil Co. of New Jersey. And another piece of John D. Rockefeller's former empire, Standard Oil Co. of New York, or Socony, was No. 9. These two were predecessors of Exxon-Mobil, today's No. 2.

Others were muscled out as manufacturing's dominance in the U.S. economy dwindled. United States Steel Corp., which was No. 3 in 1955, is now 209th.

## Cell phones get more computer functions

By BRUCE MEYERSON  
AP BUSINESS WRITER

**ATLANTA (AP)**—Of the half billion or so cell phones produced in 2003, fewer than 10 million were so-called "smart phones" with the type of operating system, calendar, e-mail and other software found on computers and handheld organizers.

All the rest of those handsets also run on software, albeit dozens of incompatible operating systems, each chiefly designed to deliver what is still the only "killer application" most users demand of a cell phone - to be a phone.

For those even aware there's software involved, the decision to buy a cell phones still tends to revolve around stylistic preferences - "candy bar" or "clamshell" shape, for example.

But this week, at the U.S. cellular industry's annual trade show, a number of influential companies will be heralding what they see as a not-so-distant future when it's all about software:

Everyone will want their cell phones to do a lot more computer stuff. People will shop for these smart phones with a careful eye toward the operating system, e-mail handler and Web browser, how many other programs are available for that platform and how well they all interact with a regular computer.

It should be no surprise, then, that a famous software company which already gets paid more than \$40 for nearly every PC sold in the world is trying to extend its business model to the cell phone market, confident the familiar look of Windows will be a welcome sight on the small screen.

And where Microsoft is involved, of course, there are sure to be differing views, many of them revolving around familiar names such as Linux and Palm.

But even more notable this week in Atlanta will be the first-ever appearance at CTIA

Wireless by Symbian Ltd., a consortium led by Nokia and other handset makers which is the early leader in smart phone software everywhere but the United States.

"We're going to see in very short order that smart phones as we know them today will move to become the largest segment in the market over the next few years," said Jerry Panagrossi, vice president of U.S. operations for Symbian, currently the operating platform for 15 smart phones, including several that more closely resemble a personal digital assistant, or PDA.

While many have sung this smart phone tune before, and it may take more than a few years before such phones are commonplace, recent industry developments suggest change is at hand.

Advances in microprocessors, color screens and battery life have enabled engineering coups such as the Treo 600 from PalmOne, which packs most of the punch of a full-blown PDA into a nearly cell-phone sized package.

And while the power of such a device is largely wasted on the feeble first wave of wireless Internet connections, speedier network technologies have finally begun to hit the market.

Against that backdrop, armed for the first time with a wide array of phones to show off, software makers will try to draw some of the show's spotlight.

For now, however, most handset makers and wireless carriers are keeping their options open as the market takes shape.

One key debate remains whether the emergence of a dominant platform might fuel demand for smart phones by enabling software developers to churn out more and better programs because they're not busy rewriting them for multiple operating systems.



German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, standing beside his wife, Doris, holds a "penphone," by German company Siemens during the opening of the CeBIT computer fair in Hanover, Germany Thursday. The "penphone" is a prototype with an integrated triband cellular phone.

## Tobacco industry faces US in trial

By NANCY ZUCKERBROD  
AP WRITER

**WASHINGTON (AP)**—Cigarette makers are no strangers to the courtroom, but after settling a lawsuit with states, they face Uncle Sam as the plaintiff bid this fall in what is shaping up as the biggest civil racketeering trial in history.

Repeated efforts to get the \$280 billion case dismissed have failed. So has an attempt by the Bush administration to negotiate a settlement.

Last week, U.S. District Judge Gladys Kessler rejected the latest bid to have the case thrown out, and the government submitted a list of witnesses it intends to call. On it is a who's who of the tobacco industry.

Six years ago, 46 states settled their suit against the industry for \$206 billion, payable over 25 years. Four states settled separately for a total of \$40 billion. The states recovered costs for treating sick smokers.

Kessler ruled the federal government cannot do the same. Instead, she is letting the Justice Department sue the industry for allegedly conspiring to deceive the public about the dangers of tobacco and the addictive nature of nicotine. The government also claims the companies targeted children through advertising and then lied about it.

Government lawyers are pursuing the civil case under the Racketeer Influenced and

Corrupt Organizations Act, known as RICO. The 1970 law was created to prosecute mobsters.

The defendants are Philip Morris USA Inc. and its parent, Altria Group Inc.; R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.; Brown & Williamson Tobacco Co.; British American Tobacco Ltd.; Lorillard Tobacco Co.; Liggett Group Inc.; Counsel for Tobacco Research-U.S.A.; and The Tobacco Institute.

Even if the government can show the money was earned through fraud, it also would have to prove the fraud was likely to continue, Ohlemeyer said.

The industry is awaiting a ruling from the judge on that issue.













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# World

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## Life &amp; Style

# Woman wins Pritzker architecture prize

By **ANDREW BRIDGES**  
AP WRITER

Zaha Hadid, an Iraqi-born architect who struggled for years to get her audacious and unconventional designs built, won the prestigious 2004 Pritzker Architecture Prize on Sunday, the first woman to receive the profession's highest honor.

Pritzker jurors singled out her designs for an Austrian ski jump, a German fire station and an Ohio art museum.

Hadid "is probably one of the youngest laureates and has one of the clearest architectural trajectories we've seen in many years. Each project unfolds with new excitement and innovation," said California architect and juror Frank Gehry, a 1989 Pritzker winner.

Hadid, 53, now a British citizen, exploded on the world architecture scene

two decades ago when she won a competition to design a clifftop resort above Hong Kong. The project was never built, but it thrust her into the public eye.

For years, Hadid was most famous for being the architect whose buildings—universally lauded as distinctive and dynamic—remained unbuilt.

"It became like a cause celebre, because it perpetuated this wondering 'why not,' 'it's not possible,' 'it's not buildable,'" Hadid said during a recent interview in West Hollywood.

Hadid said the "very extreme" drawings she created for architectural competitions were met with skepticism. "They did not believe it was possible," Hadid said of her inven-

tive designs. "There was not any work like that being done."

She credits the 1997 opening of the titanium-clad Guggenheim Museum that Gehry designed for Bilbao, Spain, with sparking greater interest in her work.

A year later, Hadid said, she won four competitions, followed by four more the following year. Among them were two museums: the Rosenthal Center for Contemporary Art in Cincinnati and the National Center for Contemporary Arts in Rome.

"Without ever building, Zaha Hadid would have radically expanded architecture's repertoire of spatial articulation," juror Rolf Fehlbaum said. Now that her designs have begun to take shape, "the power of her innovation is fully revealed."

Her 60-person London firm, Zaha



This is an undated photo of the Vitra Fire Station in Weil Am Rhein, Germany, that won Zaha Hadid the 2004 Pritzker Architecture Prize.

AP

Pritzker Architecture Prize winner for 2004 Zaha Hadid poses Sunday, March 14, 2004, in West Hollywood, Calif.

AP



## REVIEW

# Wagner's Ring Cycle returns to Met

By **RONALD BLUM**  
AP WRITER

**NEW YORK (AP)**—When it comes to Wagner's Ring Cycle, the Metropolitan Opera pretty much stands alone. Others may reinterpret the four-opera marathon of gods, humans and dwarfs, injecting the tetralogy with Marxism, environmentalism, futurism and other -isms too numerous to name.

At the Met, the sets, costumes and staging are as Wagner defined them before the first full production of "Der Ring des Nibelungen" at the first Bayreuth Festival in 1876, only updated with modern technology.

Those who want to see the head god Wotan emerge from a white stretch limo may go elsewhere—at the Met, a rainbow bridge is a rainbow bridge and a magic fire is a magic fire.

The Ring Cycle returned for the first time in four years Saturday with the prologue "Das Rheingold" in a revival of the familiar Otto Schenk production of 1987, with sets by Guenther Schneider-Siemssen and costumes by Rolf Langenfass. James Morris repeated as Wotan, Yvonne Naef made her Met debut as his nagging wife, Fricka, and

Philip Langridge was outstanding as the slimy fire god, Loge.

The key problems facing these gods are those many New Yorkers struggle with: finding quality housing at an affordable price, and haggling with contractors over payments.

Wotan hired the giants Fafner and Fasolt to build his castle, Valhalla, and promised them his sister-in-law, Freia, the goddess of youth, as payment. When the castle is completed, Wotan tries to renege on the deal. Loge suggests the giants accept the Rheingold, which the dwarf Alberich stole from the Rheinmaidens at the start of the opera after they rejected him and he renounced love.

When the giants take Freia as hostage, the gods start to wither. Wotan and Loge go to Nibelheim, kidnap Alberich and force him to give them the gold as ransom. Wotan rips the ring that has been forged from Alberich's hand, and the dwarf curses it. The gold is turned over to the giants, and the gods make their way over the rainbow bridge to Valhalla.

The story continues in the three operas that complete the work.

Morris, the Wotan of our times, has lost some of the power in his voice,

which was evident during his first few lines. But he grew stronger through the performance, and the elegance of his interpretation more than compensated. While Naef was vocally secure, her acting was nondescript.

Running about the stage, Langridge's Loge was a cunning character and completely amoral—his hand gestures suggested that those who stick to principles are fools.

Jennifer Welch-Babidge, who recently gave birth to her second child, was an earthy Freia. Richard Paul Fink was a delicious Alberich, combining ugliness, frustration, megalomania and resignation. Sergei Koptchak's booming Fafner was paired with Evgenij Nikitin's understated Fasolt.

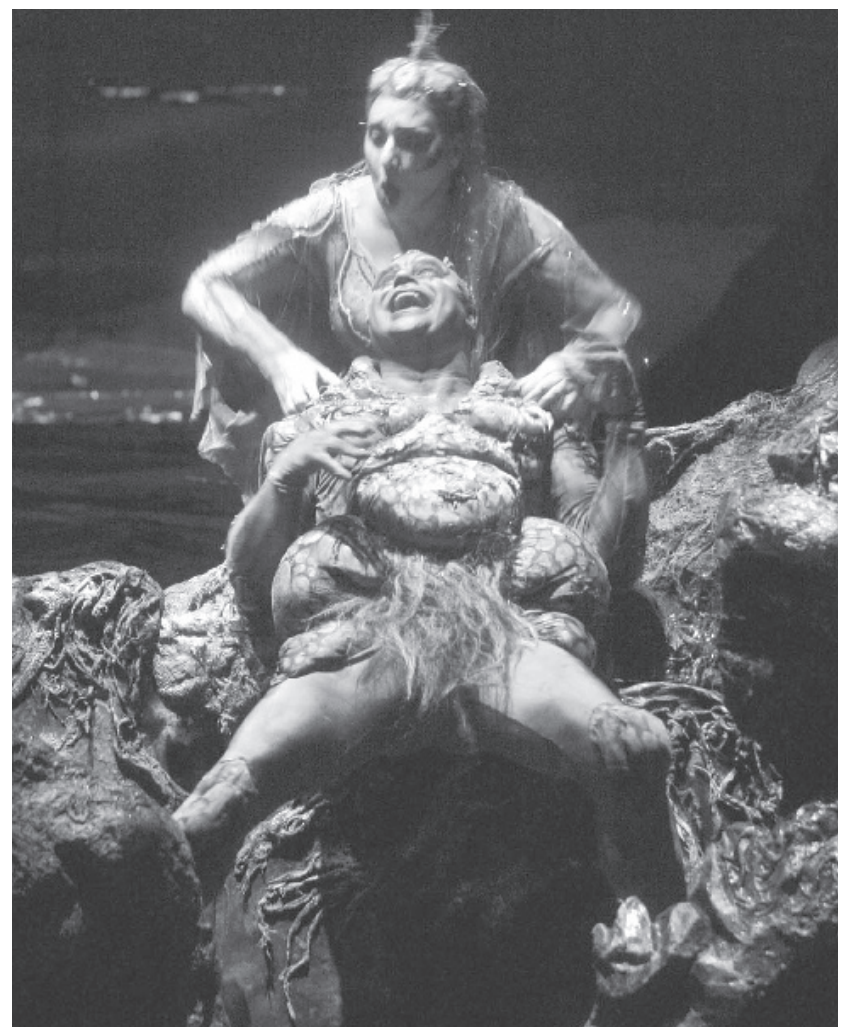
Led by artistic director James Levine, the Met orchestra gave a glowing account, although there was some shakiness in the horns.

The Saturday matinee Ring Cycles, which are broadcast nationally by the Met, continue with "Die Walkure" on April 3, "Siegfried" on April 17 and "Gotterdammerung" on April 24. There are two complete Ring Cycles scheduled within Wagner's intended six-day span, starting April 26 and May 3.

Hadid Architects, has been flooded with commissions, including a BMW factory in Germany, an arts center in Oklahoma and a train station in Italy. Hadid will be awarded a \$100,000 grant and a bronze medallion during a

May 31 ceremony at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia.

The Pritzker Prize, sponsored by the Chicago family that developed the Hyatt Hotel chain, was created 26 years ago.



Richard Paul Fink, in the role of Alberich, front, and Jane Bunnell, in the role of Flosshilde, perform in an underwater scene during a dress rehearsal of Richard Wagner's "Das Rheingold" at the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Wednesday.

AP



# 'Dawn of the Dead' debut tops 'Passion'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Audiences feasted on zombies as the fright flick "Dawn of the Dead" ruled the box office, debuting with \$27.3 million and bumping "The Passion of the Christ" from the top spot.

Mel Gibson's "The Passion" took in \$19.2 million, slipping to second place after three straight weekends on top, according to studio estimates Sunday.

"The Passion" raised its domestic total to \$295.3 million since opening Feb. 25. The movie passed "The Sixth Sense," which earned \$293.5 million, to take over 18th place on the all-time domestic chart.

Opening in third place with \$11.4 million was the serial-killer thriller "Taking Lives," star-

ring Angelina Jolie and Ethan Hawke in a tale of an FBI profiler tracking a murderer who assumes victims' identities.

In narrower release, Jim Carrey's "Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind" premiered at No. 6 with \$8.6 million. Carrey plays a man reliving recollections of a soured romance after he hires a company to erase his memories of his lover, played by Kate Winslet.

The overall box office rose for the fourth straight weekend, with the top 12 movies grossing \$109.7 million, up 33 percent from the same weekend a year ago.

Much of that lift is due to "The Passion," which pulled Hollywood out of an early-year slump.

"We anticipated it would



Left to right, Michael (Jake Weber), Ana (Sarah Polley), Andre (Mekhi Phifer) and Luda (Inna Korobkina) charge to head off a zombie break-in in the zombie action thriller, "Dawn of the Dead." AP

open well and contribute to the total box office, but certainly not at this magnitude," said Rob Schwartz, head of distribution for Newmarket Films, which released "The Passion."

Hollywood revenues for the year are at about \$1.8 billion, 3 to 4 percent ahead of last year's, said Paul Dergarabedian, president of box-office tracker Exhibitor Relations.

"Dawn of the Dead" stars Sarah Polley and Ving Rhames in a remake of George Romero's 1979 horror tale about survivors holed up in a shopping mall from a plague of flesh-eating zombies.

Opening in 2,745 theaters, "Dawn of the Dead" averaged a healthy \$9,945 a cinema. "Taking Lives" averaged \$4,218 in 2,705 theaters, while "Eternal Sunshine" did \$6,334 in 1,353 cinemas.

## VH1 stresses storytelling, nostalgia

By DAVID BAUDER  
AP TELEVISION WRITER



NEW YORK (AP)—The renewed VH1 has imagined itself as the antidote for the itchy remote control finger.

If you've seen VH1 in the past year, chances are it happened something like this: While mindlessly channel surfing, you stop on a picture of a forgotten 1980s band. Does that singer from A Flock of Seagulls still have a haircut that looks like a science experiment gone wrong?

Does he even have hair at all anymore? The hair, the clothes, the music—what were we thinking during those heady days of the Reagan administration?

Before you know it, 20 minutes have passed, and you've dropped the remote.

Somewhere, Brian Graden and Christina Norman are smiling. The architects of VH1's reconstruction—a work still in progress—know that the first step for success is simply to get you watching again, even if by chance.

Graden, a programming whiz at MTV, was given the assignment of resurrecting VH1 two years ago. After a good run in the late 1990s, the network long considered MTV's big brother had grown stale. Channel surfers were finding things like the 98th airing of "Behind the Music" with Poison, Graden said.

"You think I'm exaggerating," he said. "But I'm not."

Norman, the company's general manager, recalled a trip to the ladies' room early in her tenure where she listened to what was playing on VH1 over the loudspeaker. It was the voice of the "Behind the Music" narrator. And it was dull.

"We were speaking in a monotone to the audience all day," she said. "If we weren't excited about what we were putting on the air, how could we expect the audience to be?"

They started experimenting with new ideas. Some fell flat; VH1 viewers weren't interested in old movies like "The Godfather," because those were available elsewhere. The short-lived "Music Behind Bars" series, about inmate musicians, was a public relations disaster.

It was at the end of 2002, when "I Love the '80s" began drawing solid ratings, that they hit upon a direction.

Many people consider VH1 primarily a music channel, but executives were surprised by research that found music was the third thing mentioned by viewers when they thought of the network. Nostalgia and storytelling came first.

"People think of VH1 in a multidimensional way, not just as a music channel," Graden said. "So the obvious place we went is to tap into the broader sense of nostalgia, period, across

all of pop culture, but still leading with music."

As a result, "I Love the '80s" was as likely to talk about who shot J.R. as who shot up the Billboard charts.

The "Bands Reunited" series has attracted attention lately. Host Aamer Haleem leads viewers on a journey to find members of defunct acts like Kajagoogoo, the Alarm and Squeeze and persuade them to perform together again. Sometimes he succeeds, sometimes not.

On "Best Week Ever," VH1 has created instant nostalgia, treating the events of the past week as they'd appear on "I Love the '80s." It's a clever way of keeping current, too.

Prime-time ratings during 2003 were up 24 percent over the previous year, according to Nielsen Media Research.

"I think it was absolutely a necessity to broaden the music filter," said Jeff Gaspin, a former VH1 executive who now works at NBC and Bravo. "It was definitely what my next move would have been if I had stayed. We had sliced music every possible way that it could have been sliced. We started doing 'Behind the Music' shows on people who had done one record."

The danger for VH1 is in taking away a clear identity as a music network and joining a pack of general entertainment networks like E!, Trio and Bravo that are doing a lot of the same things.

"It's definitely a risk when you leave your niche," Gaspin said. "But the other risk is that you can't grow."

Nostalgia-oriented programs like "I Love the '80s" and countdown shows are specifically designed to hook channel surfers. They essentially don't have a beginning, middle and end. Viewers can tune in or out at any point and not feel lost or sense that they're missing something, Graden said.

VH1 doesn't have, in the traditional sense, appointment viewing—like when fans know to tune in to MTV every Tuesday at 10 p.m. for a new episode of "Real World."

Instead, Graden scheduled "Bands Reunited" in a marathon fashion. There was a new episode every night for a week, repeated several times during the day, to build a word of mouth excitement. VH1 viewers may not think to come back every week at the same time for a show, yet if they saw something they liked one night, they might be tempted to tune in the next night.

"We want appointment viewing," he said. "But our appointments are engineered differently."

That's also a polite way of saying VH1 doesn't quite have a signature show that attracts broad attention, like "Behind the Music" once was or "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" is for Gaspin's Bravo.

wallace



# OutKast wins, leads Soul Train Awards

LOS ANGELES (AP)—OutKast's "Speakerboxx/The Love Below" won two awards, including R&B/soul or rap album of the year, to lead the winners at Saturday's 18th annual Soul Train Music Awards.

The Atlanta duo, who won the Grammy last month for best album of the year, also scored the Michael Jackson Award for best R&B/soul or rap music video for "Hey Ya!"

The awards, named after the long-running television show, honor recording artists in R&B, hip-hop, rap and gospel music. They were held at the International Cultural Center and televised live via syndication.

OutKast was the lone multiple-winner at the ceremony hosted by Alicia Keys and producer/songwriter Kenneth "Babyface" Edmonds.

Soul crooner Luther Vandross was the night's sentimental choice, winning best R&B/soul single, male for his "Dance With My Father."

Vandross, recovering from a debilitating stroke, continued a victory streak that saw him take home four Grammy Awards and four NAACP Image Awards at ceremonies in the past two months.

The Soul Train Music Awards



OutKast members from left, Andre 3000 and Big Boi, accept the 2004 Sammy Davis Jr. Award for "Entertainer of the Year," Male at the Soul Train Music Awards, Saturday night, March 20, 2004, in Los Angeles.

celebrates artists in R&B, hip-hop, rap and gospel music. The awards are chosen by a group of radio station professionals, talent managers and performers.

## Complete list of winners:

**R&B/Soul Single, Female:** "You Don't Know My Name," Alicia Keys.

**R&B/Soul Single, Male:** "Dance With My Father," Lu-

ther Vandross.

**R&B/Soul Single, Group, Band or Duo:** "Say Yes," Floetry.

**R&B/Soul Album, Female:** "Dangerously In Love," Beyonce.

**R&B/Soul Album, Male:** "Chocolate Factory," R. Kelly.

**R&B/Soul Album Group, Band or Duo:** "Pandemoni-

um," B2K.

**R&B/Soul or Rap Album of the Year:** "Speakerboxx/The Love Below," OutKast.

**R&B/Soul or Rap New Artist:** "Right Thurr," Chingy.

**R&B/Soul or Rap Music Video:** "Hey Ya," OutKast.

**Gospel Album:** "The Prince of Praise (Live at New Birth Cathedral)," Byron Cage.

## Prince Andrew to visit US for Master's

AUGUSTA, Ga. (AP)—Prince Andrew is making his way stateside to watch the Master's tournament. Andrew arrives in Augusta on April 5 for the Augusta National golf tournament, according to the calendar posted by Queen Elizabeth's press secretary.

The golf course is named for Augusta of Saxe-Gotha-Altenburg, an 18th century relative of Andrew, the Duke of York, and mother of King George III.

Andrew, who is captain of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St. Andrews, will also attend a reception designed to promote U.S.-British trade, said former Augusta Mayor Charles DeVaney.

"I think everyone should think of it as a great honor for our city," DeVaney said.

Britain's Prince Andrew watches the parade of the 25th anniversary of St. Lucia's Independence at the Mindoo Phillip Park in Castries, St. Lucia, in this Feb. 22, 2004 file photo.

AP



## Entertainment editor Joel Siegel awarded

BUFFALO, N.Y. (AP)—Joel Siegel, entertainment editor for the television show "Good Morning America," received the Gilda Radner Courage Award on Saturday from the Roswell Park Alliance Foundation. Siegel, 60, was credited with offering hope to others through his public battle with colon and lung cancer.

Siegel said he seems to be OK

now, but he recently recorded a public service announcement saying that an earlier colonoscopy would have spared him three surgeries, radiation treatments and chemotherapy.

Siegel wrote about his experiences in a 2002 book, "Lessons for Dylan," which contains reflections on his life for his young son.

"I'm not sure whether it was

the cancer or having the child at 55, but those are really two life-changing events," Siegel said Saturday.

Quoting Radner, the late comedian and cancer victim whom Siegel considered a friend, he added, "One of the things cancer does is it helps you set your priorities. If it weren't for the downside, everybody would want to have it."

## Man left holding rings can consign or sell to jeweler

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

DEAR ABBY: You printed a letter from a man in Chicago who had broken his engagement. He asked how to dispose of the rings because it was "no longer possible to return them to the jeweler, and a pawnshop would never give (him) their full value." You advised him to get a written appraisal and donate the rings to charity.

I have been a jeweler for 20 years, and I disagree. If that young man needs the money instead of a tax write-off, there are jewelers who will take items on consignment.

Another idea is to run an ad in the classified section of the local newspaper. Before he places the ad, the man should contact a local jeweler, make an appointment to have a written appraisal done, and ask the jeweler if—for a commission—he can meet the prospective buyer in the store. This adds credibility to the ring that is being sold, and it is the only safe way to resell jewelry to the public.

Jewelers spend thousands of dollars to get people inside their doors; this would be two more prospective customers for the jeweler. That is why most independent jewelers wouldn't mind accommodating the young man.

If all else fails, and he's stuck with the rings, I have two other suggestions:

1. Get a safe-deposit box and keep them there. They will not lose value.
2. Melt down the bands and engagement ring and have a wonderful Mother's Day gift created. She would appreciate it more than anyone.

JEWELER IN THE SOUTH, DAPHNE, ALA.

DEAR SOUTHERN JEWELER: Thank you for your input. I learn from my readers every day. By the way, you aren't the only jeweler who offered suggestions. Read on:

DEAR ABBY: Your advice about donating the rings to charity isn't the only choice that young man has.

My husband is a custom jeweler. Women come into his store all the time wanting "divorce rings." They bring their old wedding rings, have them melted down and have a different one created. That young man could do the same thing for himself or for someone else important in his life.

JEWELER'S WIFE, CARRIZOZO, N.M.

DEAR WIFE: Hmmm ... a divorce ring? If the person doesn't mind being reminded of an unhappy chapter in life, I suppose that would work.

DEAR ABBY: Set the record straight and send that young man back to the jeweler! I have been buying estate jewelry for more than 25 years. In my experience, there are four ways to liquidate a diamond ring: (1) sell to a jeweler; (2) consign to a jewelry store; (3) sell through auction; (4) donate to a charity.

Consignment is usually the best choice because you can determine a fair price in advance and the jeweler doesn't have to front the money to buy it. Donating is harder because most charities are geared toward receiving money rather than merchandise.

Above all, remember the two "don'ts": Don't sell to someone you know—and don't run an ad, because it could be dangerous.

HANK FRIEDMAN, MARIN COUNTY, CALIF.

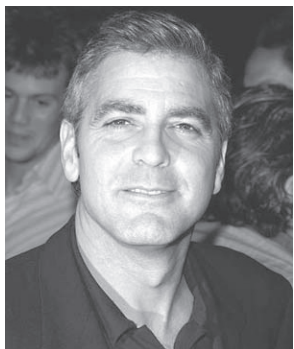
DEAR HANK: Thank you for the helpful suggestions—and thank you, too, for the warning.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at [www.DearAbby.com](http://www.DearAbby.com) or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

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Dear Abby



## Clooney helps dad at fund-raiser

FORT MITCHELL, Ky. (AP)—Actor George Clooney helped raise about \$140,000 Saturday at private fund-raisers for his father's congressional campaign.

Nick Clooney, a longtime Cincinnati television personality, is the lone Democratic candidate for the 4th District seat of retiring U.S. Rep. Ken Lucas.

George Clooney spoke briefly at two events in northern Kentucky, but stayed away from making political statements. Instead, he talked about his father and how he wanted to help him with the election.

"It's great having my son come in to help," Nick Clooney said. "It's family. When my son and my daughter show up and help me, it means a lot and it shows me this is more than just politics. We still matter to one another."

About 150 people paid \$250 each to mingle with the actor at The Oriental Wok, a restaurant in Fort Mitchell. In another fund-raiser, about 100 people paid \$1,000 each to see the actor at a private home.









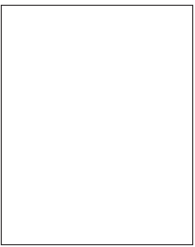








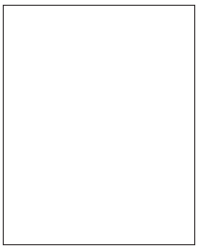




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# Saipan Tribune Sports

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE